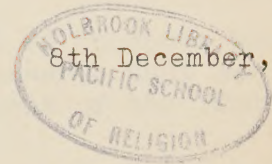


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WCC Summons All Christians to Work for Peace

(New Delhi) - Christians everywhere have been summoned by the World Council of Churches to "work together for community within nations and for peace with justice and freedom among them".

"There is no more urgent task for Christians", declared the Third Assembly in an 800-word message addressed to the hundreds of thousands of local congregations represented in the WCC's 198 member churches in some sixty countries around the globe.

Christians were called upon to join their efforts for peace "so that the causes of much contemporary misery may be rooted out".

The message, approved at the final business session of the Assembly, stressed that "we have to take our stand against injustice caused to any race, or to any man on account of his race", and that "we have to learn to make a Christian contribution to the service of men through secular agencies".

"Christian love requires not only the sharing of worldly goods but costly personal service", it said. "All over the world young people are giving an example in their spontaneous offering of themselves."

Noting that "in no field has Christian co-operation been more massive and effective than in service to people in every kind of distress", it said that Christians "need to think out together in concrete terms the forms of Christian service for today and together act upon them".

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The Assembly's letter to the congregations also affirmed that "we must together seek the fulness of Christian unity. . . every member of the Christian family, of Eastern and Western tradition, ancient churches and younger churches, men and women, young and old, of every race and every nation".

"Our brethren in Christ are given to us, not chosen by us", it said.
(See Document I appended). EPS, Geneva

WCC Holds Religious Freedom a Fundamental Right

(New Delhi) - The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches has issued a strong espousal of religious liberty which asserts that human attempts "to coerce or to eliminate faith are violations of the fundamental ways of God with men".

The 750-word statement adopted unanimously by the nearly 600 delegates specifically decried the use of "legal enactment or pressure of social custom" to stifle spiritual beliefs.

"The freedom which God has given in Christ", it said, "implies a free response to God's love and the responsibility to serve fellow men at the point of deepest need."

The Assembly said that Christians see religious liberty "as a consequence of God's creative work, of his redemption of man in Christ and his calling of men into his service".

Although holding this distinctive Christian basis for religious liberty, the delegates emphasized that they regarded "this right as fundamental for men everywhere".

The statement was described by a WCC spokesman as being intended to bring the essentials of religious freedom to bear on conditions existing today throughout the world, especially at points where liberty is curtailed or denied.

In taking its action, the Assembly reaffirmed the Declaration on Religious Liberty adopted in 1948 by the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council, now integrated in the WCC, and said that it continues to hold to the provisions of that document.

It also hailed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations in 1948 as "an important instrument in promoting respect for an observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms".

The Assembly said the article on religious freedom in the Universal Declaration was "an acceptable standard, always provided that it be given a comprehensive interpretation".

The article commended by the delegates reads as follows:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

This general standard, according to the Assembly's statement, "should be given explicit expression in every aspect of society" in recognition "of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family".

Illustrating the need to implement the standard set by the UN, the Assembly pointed out that freedom of thought, conscience and belief, "even considered as inner freedom, requires freedom of access to reliable information".

Unstated but implicit in this observation, it was understood, was the whole gamut of mass media of communication to insure a free flow of information between East and West through an untrammelled press, unjammed radio broadcasts, uncensored news despatches.

The Assembly also stressed that freedom to manifest one's religion or belief, in public or in private and alone or in community with others, "is essential to the expression of inner freedom".

EPS, Geneva

WCC Assembly Sends Message on Race to South Africa

(New Delhi) - Solidarity with all those who serve and suffer to eliminate race or colour discrimination or segregation, especially in South Africa, has been expressed by the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

"Christians everywhere are involved in the struggle", the Assembly said in a message addressed to Christians in South Africa. "May all who thus serve, and all who suffer, be strengthened.

"May dignity and unity among men be established through the righteousness of God, in your land as well as in those from which we come.

"We pray that as the peoples of Africa move into their new day, the Church of Christ will play an ever-increasing creative role in promoting understanding, justice, faith, hope and love."

The Assembly endorsed a declaration made a year earlier at a meeting held in Cottesloe, near Johannesburg, South Africa, by a WCC-convened consultation of the Council's eight member churches in that country.


The declaration said in part: "No one who believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any Church on the grounds of his colour or race."

Since the consultation, three South African Dutch Reformed churches which took part in it have withdrawn from the WCC. They are churches which generally agree with their government's apartheid policy.

In the message adopted here, South African Christians were assured that members of the Assembly "have been aware of the developments within the past 18 months in the relationships between Christians and churches in South Africa and the World Council of Churches".

"To all of you who preach Christ to the unbelieving and to all who manifest the Spirit of Christ to their neighbours, we offer our encouragement and fellowship, and assure you of our prayers", the Assembly said.

EPS, Geneva



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WCC Appeals for Peace

(New Delhi) - The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches has appealed to all governments and peoples to "turn back from the road towards war into the paths of peace" by renouncing the threat of force.

"This calls for an end to the war of nerves, to pressures on small countries, to the rattling of bombs", it declared. "It is not possible to follow at the same time policies of menace and of mutual disarmament."

Asserting that "to halt the race in arms is imperative", the Assembly said that "concrete steps must be taken" to reach "the accepted goal" of general disarmament.

"Meanwhile", it urged, "the search for a decisive first step, such as the verified cessation of nuclear tests, should be pressed forward despite all obstacles and setbacks."

At the same time, "to build peace with justice, barriers of mutual distrust must be attacked at every level", it stated. "Mutual confidence is the most precious resource in the world today: none should be wasted, more must be found.

"Barriers to communication must go, not least where they divide peoples, churches, even families. Freedom of human contact, information, and cultural exchange is essential for the building of peace."

Adoption of the 650-word appeal came on the last day of the Assembly after delegates rejected a vigorous effort to have it replaced by a shorter text that stressed the "friendship, co-operation and mutual trust" experienced during the 17 days of sessions here.

The substitute appeal, intended to replace one that was drafted and revised by the Assembly Committee on International Affairs, was offered by Prof. Charles A. Coulson, mathematics professor of Oxford University and a Methodist delegate from the United Kingdom.

The adopted appeal characterized war as "a common enemy" and "an offense to the nature of man".

"The future of many generations and the heritage of ages past hang in the balance", it said. "They are now easy to destroy, since the actions or miscalculations of a few can bring about a holocaust. They are harder to safeguard and advance, for that requires the dedicated action of all." (See Document II appended).

EPS, Geneva

Role as Missionaries Urged for Laymen

(New Delhi) - "One of the greatest missionary opportunities confronting the churches today lies in the potential witness of great numbers of Christian laymen criss-crossing the world in the service of business, government and other occupations", the World Council of Churches has been told.

"This vast new resource which God has given to the Church has been largely unharnessed", said a committee report dealing with the Council's new Division of World Mission and Evangelism.

"Many countries are urgently recruiting doctors, engineers, university staff, artisans and other technical workers", it pointed out. "We should develop procedures for making these needs known to our churches and directing Christian men and women to these strategic posts.

"It is important that the churches take initiative in vocational guidance at this point and encourage able Christian laymen to enter important secular work abroad from a Christian missionary motivation."

According to the committee, "the churches in the homeland should take steps to find out about their people going to serve abroad and to establish an appropriate relationship for them".

"This should include (a) recognition of their role as missionaries, (b) guidance and orientation for this service, (c) fellowship and backing in their work so that they might have an intelligent and informed purpose as Christians in their going abroad."

The committee also endorsed proposals for the World Council to foster among all Christian missions and churches working in particular areas, "a more effective deployment of resources, more co-ordination of effort, . . . more experiments in 'multilateral' action, and more joint action where appropriate".

EPS, Geneva

Closing Worship Emphasizes Re-Dedication to Christ

(New Delhi) - The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches closed here as it began with a service of worship. Participants heard that Christians are meant to be the disciples of Christ, "His followers, not just His advertising experts and His partisans, who - when they are off duty - live their own life, as every man does".

Dr. Martin Niemöller, president of the Evangelical Church of Hesse-Nassau in Germany and a newly-elected president of the World Council, was the preacher at the service. Another new president, Dr. David G. Moses, principal of Hislop College, Nagpur, India, was the minister.

Dr. Niemöller called for a re-dedication to the service of Christ. Dealing with the Assembly, the preacher pointed out the common responsibility of delegates for the actions taken during the meeting.

"If we take this conscientiously and seriously, we cannot help feeling a heavy burden and a weighty load, which we shall have to carry with us constantly, for we shall have no opportunity any more, to change or to revise the decisions, in which we have taken part", he said.

Arguing against either complacency or despondency over the decisions taken during the meeting, Dr. Niemöller declared that "our commission and work will not come to an end; we must not look on this Assembly as something really concluded and finished. The work, which we have tried to do here in common, we shall have to carry on and continue; for Christ is the light of the world, the light everywhere and always".

EPS, Geneva

WCC Official Assays Events of Assembly

(New Delhi) - The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches cannot be judged only by what was formulated in words here.

This opinion was expressed by the Council's general secretary, Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, of Geneva, Switzerland, in a final press conference. He mentioned a number of "unexpected by-products" of the gathering of representatives of 198 Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican churches in India.

He cited the first big confrontation of "some of the oldest churches in Christendom with some of the youngest". The Orthodox churches from Russia and young churches from Asia and Africa had come to feel they must get closer because "we represent Christian minorities surrounded by strongly non-Christian environments", he said.

In the opinion of the general secretary the ecumenical movement is showing greater maturity than at its two previous Assemblies at Amsterdam in 1948, and at Evanston, Ill. in 1954.

Dr. Visser 't Hooft said that there were far stronger and more effective Asian and African voices in the Council than ever before. "Although it may not yet be possible to say with certainty that Western domination has completely ceased, these young churches are no longer little minorities in corners but making themselves heard and felt both in committees and the Assembly."

Dr. D. T. Niles of Jaffna, Ceylon, general secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference, said he felt the Assembly had been characterized by "a quiet determination to go and do something" about the things which had been talked about here and at previous Assemblies. He also stressed that the presence of the Orthodox had strengthened the voice of the younger churches.

In answer to a question concerning the "effect" of the Roman Catholic observers, Dr. Visser 't Hooft said the "observers are just that", and no one expected anything more than that they would make a report to the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity. He emphasized that for a long time there had been effective channels of communication between the World Council and Roman Catholic ecumenists.

The general secretary of the World Council reminded the reporters present that one of the most important though little publicized elements of the Assembly was the Bible study on the theme, "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World".

Dr. Visser 't Hooft underscored the important role the Orthodox had taken at this Assembly, where participants from the Eastern churches had been actively engaged in formulation of reports. No separate statement was issued by the Orthodox here outlining their view of the nature of the Church and unity as has been true of previous ecumenical assemblies.

EPS, Geneva

MESSAGE OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Third Assembly, New Delhi

MESSAGE COMMITTEE

The Third Assembly of the WCC meeting in New Delhi addresses this letter to the member churches and their congregations. We rejoice and thank God that we experience here a fellowship as deep as before and now wider. New member churches coming in considerable numbers and strength both from the ancient Orthodox tradition of Eastern Christendom and from Africa, Asia, Latin America and other parts of the world visibly demonstrate that Christianity now has a home in every part of the world. In this fellowship we are able to speak and act freely, for we are all part-takers together with Christ. Together we have sought to understand our common calling to witness, service and unity.

We are deeply grateful for the prayers of countless Christian people and for the study of our theme "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World" by which many of you have shared in our work. Now we return to our churches to do, with you, the things that have been shown to us here.

All over the world new possibilities of life, freedom and prosperity are being actively, even passionately pursued. In some lands there is disillusionment with the benefits that a technically expert society can produce; and over all there hangs the shadow of vast destruction through war. Nevertheless mankind is not paralysed by these threats. The momentum of change is not reduced. We Christians share men's eager quest for life, for freedom from poverty, oppression and disease. God is at work in the opening possibilities for mankind in our day. He is at work even when the powers of evil rebel against Him and call down His judgement. We do not know by what ways God will lead us: but our trust is in Jesus Christ who is now and always our eternal life.

When we speak to men as Christians we must speak the truth of our faith: that there is only one way to the Father, namely Jesus Christ, His Son. On that one way we are bound to meet our brother. We meet our brother Christian. We meet also our brother man; and before we speak to him of Christ, Christ has already sought him.

Christ is the way and therefore we have to walk together witnessing to Him and serving all men. This is His commandment. There is no greater service to men than to tell them of the living Christ and no more effective witness than a life offered in service. The indifference or hostility of men may check our open speaking but God is not silenced. He speaks through the worship and the sufferings of His Church. Her prayers and patience are, by His gracious acceptance of them made part of the witness He bears to Christ.

We need to think out together in concrete terms the forms of Christian service for today and together act upon them. In no field has Christian co-operation been more massive and effective than in service to people in every kind of distress. There is no more urgent task for Christians than to work together for community within nations and for peace with justice and freedom among them, so that the causes of much contemporary misery may

be rooted out. We have to take our stand against injustice caused to any race, or to any man on account of his race. We have to learn to make a Christian contribution to the service of men through secular agencies. Christian love requires not only the sharing of worldly goods but costly personal service. All over the world young people are giving an example in their spontaneous offering of themselves.

We must together seek the fulness of Christian unity. We need for this purpose every member of the Christian family, of Eastern and Western tradition, ancient churches and younger churches, men and women, young and old, of every race and every nation. Our brethren in Christ are given to us, not chosen by us. In some things our convictions do not yet permit us to act together, but we have made progress in giving content to the unity we seek. Let us therefore find out the things which in each place we can do together now, and faithfully do them, praying and working always for that fuller unity which Christ wills for His Church.

This letter is written from the World Council of Churches' Assembly. But the real letter written to the world today does not consist of words. We Christian people, wherever we are, are a letter from Christ to His world "written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts". The message is that God in Christ has reconciled the world to Himself. Let us speak it and live it with joy and confidence "for it is the God who said 'Let light shine out of darkness' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

First Sunday in Advent, 1961

An Appeal to all Governments and Peoples

1. The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, at which are gathered Christians from all parts of the world, addresses this appeal to the government and people of every nation.
2. Today, war itself is a common enemy. War is an offence to the nature of man. The future of many generations and the heritage of ages past hang in the balance. They are now easy to destroy, since the actions or miscalculations of a few can bring about a holocaust. They are harder to safeguard and advance, for that requires the dedicated action of all. Let there be restraint and self-denial in the things which make for war, patience, and persistence in seeking to resolve the things which divide, and boldness and courage in grasping the things which make for peace.
3. To turn back from the road towards war into the paths of peace, all must renounce the threat of force. This calls for an end to the war of nerves, to pressures on small countries, to the rattling of bombs. It is not possible to follow at the same time policies of menace and of mutual disarmament.
4. To halt the race in arms is imperative. Complete and general disarmament is the accepted goal, and concrete steps must be taken to reach it. Meanwhile, the search for a decisive first step, such as the verified cessation of nuclear tests, should be pressed forward despite all obstacles and setbacks.
5. To substitute reason for force, and undergird the will to disarm, institutions of peace and orderly methods to effect change and to settle disputes are essential. This imposes a duty to strengthen the United Nations within the framework and spirit of the Charter. All countries share this duty, whether aligned with the major power blocs or independent of them. The nonaligned can contribute through their impartiality; with others they can be champions of the principles of the Charter.
6. To build peace with justice, barriers of mutual distrust must be attacked at every level. Mutual confidence is the most precious resource in the world today: none should be wasted, more must be found. The fundamentals of an open society are essential that contacts may freely develop, person to person and people to people. Barriers to communication must go, not least where they divide peoples, churches, even families. Freedom of human contact, information, and cultural exchange is essential for the building of peace.
7. To enhance mutual trust, nations should be willing to run reasonable risks for peace. For example, an equitable basis for disarmament involves, on the one hand, an acceptance of risks in an inspection and control which cannot be foolproof, and, on the other, the danger that inspection may exceed its stated duties. Those who would break through the vicious circle of suspicion must dare to pioneer.
8. There is a great opportunity for constructive action in the struggle for world development. To share the benefits of civilization with the whole of humanity is a noble and attainable objective. To press the war against poverty, disease, exploitation, and ignorance calls for greater sacrifice and for a far greater commitment of scientific, educational, and material resources than hitherto. In this common task, let the peoples find a positive programme for peace, a moral equivalent for war.

9. A creative strategy for peace with justice requires universal recognition of the claims of humanity - of all people, whatever their status, race, sex, or creed. Lest man's new powers be used to degrade his human freedom and dignity, governments must remember that they are the servants of their citizens and respect the worth of each individual human being. The supreme achievement for a government is to enhance the dignity of man, and free him for the creative exercise of his higher powers.

10. In making this appeal to all governments and peoples, we are constrained by obedience to the Lord of history, who demands righteousness and mercy and is a light unto the nations and the hearts of men. For the achievement of peace with justice, we pledge our unrelenting efforts and call upon the churches for their support in action and in prayer.